

For Immediate Release

Contact: Alex Traverso

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Speaker Núñez Appoints Members to the Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism

SACRAMENTO – Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez (D-Los Angeles) has announced the appointments of Ms. Cindy Asner, Dr. David Feinberg, Dr. Barbara Firestone, Dr. Ronald Huff, Dr. Lynn Koegel, Areva Martin, Rick Rollens, and Dr. Albert Wang as members of the 16-member Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism, effective immediately.

“Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the U.S.,” Speaker Núñez said. “We need to understand the policy implications of this growth and how the state should best prepare. The members of this commission are all leaders in the area of autism and will assist us in focusing on practical policy solutions and creating the service infrastructure to meet the needs of people with autism and their families.”

Ms. Asner is from Studio City. As the parent of an autistic child, her main focus has consisted of developing new possibilities for persons with autism, helping to ensure that both special needs teachers and main-stream teachers are trained to enable other students to develop kind and empathetic relationships with students with autism. Ms. Asner is also driven to help develop a greater public awareness of the characteristics of autism, so that the general public, the legal system and social services providers will recognize the behaviors and special needs of persons with autism in benevolent and helpful ways, rather than responding in either rejecting or punitive ways.

Dr. Feinberg, of Beverly Hills, is the Medical Director at the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Hospital/David Geffen School of Medicine, where he has been employed since 1995. He earned a bachelor of arts degree from the University of California, Berkeley, a medical degree from the University of Health Sciences/Chicago Medical School, and a master in business administration degree from Pepperdine University.

Dr. Firestone, (Commission Vice-Chairperson) of Santa Monica, is the President and CEO of The Help Group, where she has been employed since 1975. The Help Group is the largest and most comprehensive nonprofit organization serving children with special needs related to autism, learning disabilities, ADHD, mental retardation, emotional and behavioral disabilities and abuse and neglect. Dr. Firestone earned a bachelor of arts degree from Douglass College, a master of arts degree from Montclair State College, and a Ph.D. from the University of Southern California.

Dr. Huff, of Sacramento, Serves as the Director of Intake and Clinical Services for Alta California Regional Center. Prior to that, he served as Senior Psychologist with the California Department of Developmental Services from 1996 to 2005. Dr. Huff earned a

bachelor of arts degree from Florida State University, and a Ph.D. from The Ohio State University.

Dr. Koegel, of Santa Barbara, is a Researcher at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she has been employed since 1986. She is a member of the American Speech and Hearing Association and the Autism Society of America. Dr. Koegel earned bachelor and master of arts degrees, and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Ms. Martin, of Los Angeles, is the Managing Partner of Martin & Martin, LLP. Prior to that, from 1989 to 2005, she was a Partner with the law firm of Bolden & Martin. She is the co-Founder and President of the Special Needs Network, Inc. Ms. Martin earned a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Chicago, and a juris doctorate degree from Harvard Law School.

Mr. Rollens, of Granite Bay, is the President of Rollens Consulting, a government relations and lobbying company in Sacramento. He is the former Secretary of the California State Senate, a position he held for many of his 24 years of service to the Senate. Mr. Rollens is a co-Founder of the Sacramento family support group FEAT, Families for Early Autism Awareness. He earned a bachelor of arts degree from California State University, Northridge.

Dr. Wang, of Fremont, is a Partner Physician at the Palo Alto Medical Clinic, where he has served since 1989. Prior to that, he served as a Staff Physician with Kaiser from 1987 to 1989. Dr. Wang is a member of Friends of Children with Special Needs. He earned a bachelor of arts degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and a medical degree from the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine.

The mission of the Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism is to study issues including, but not limited to, the early identification and intervention of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The Commission will also identify gaps in programs, services and funding related to the early identification, education and treatment of ASD and provide recommendations to close the identified gaps. The new members serve at the pleasure of the Speaker.

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